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A Commentary on Carbuncles.

By William Todd, M.B. C.D.
The subject of this brief paper is one admirably suited for an essay of great pretensions. — It is a theme embracing many features of interest, exhibited in the nature and phenomena of the disease treated of, its progress, effects, and above all in the typically successful treatment, that have been formulated in the Edinburgh school of medicine, which is generally recognized and adopted by enlightened scientific surgeons. —

It shall now be my task, to investigate this malady, to group together, arrange the different facts implicated in it, and to demonstrate those important principles which direct us in our guidance and treatment.
From the observations and researches of some of our best surgeons - Carbuncle a disease, regarding which we may say that we hold it thoroughly in hand, for the fruits of those researches enrich us with a complete knowledge of its nature, in its etiology, pathology, and treatment. Let this knowledge be thoroughly understood and acted upon, and the reward to the surgeon will be a rich harvest of successful cases, the possession of that feeling of satisfaction, self-confidence, of difficult deeds well achieved, which it so peculiarly the sword of the medical man, in the exercise of his noble and arduous profession.

Aschraft or Carbuncle is mentioned by Hippocrates, and to him is ascribed the explanation of the term "Apopex." Helius, the Roman surgeon, writes of it in "De Se Medicina." Many of our old writers have treated of it, but until recent
Attempts have been made to institute curative of carbuncle, according to the nature & predominance of the several symptoms. Any distinction thus endeavored to be drawn, appears to be but feebly carried out, the grounds are insufficient, and it has no practical result.

**Symptomatology**

Carbuncle belongs to that class of maladies, named Furuncular diseases. They affect the skin, are generally acs accompanied by a vitiated state of the system. Carbuncle consists of an inflammation of the skin, attended by swelling, great induration, very severe pain, and an intensely crimson line of the integument.

"it is fixed to the part where it occurs, tends to spread in its extent, and terminates in suppuration with more or less sloughing, etc."
1. Cases of Sir Ashley Cooper & Mr. Symes

2. Mr. Symes
The area on the outside of the body which is susceptible to Carcinoma is well defined. It includes the following regions: the back, shoulders, back of neck, scapular region, back of the thigh, even back of the arm. The disease may also occur on the sides of the trunk, on the head, face.

The Carcinoma varies much in extent. At a rule, there is only one Carcinoma on the body at one time; these largest in size occur on the back. Mr. Coke mentions a case where one covered the whole back from the neck to the sacrum, but which eventually receded. The commencement may appear at a small tumour, a few lines in breadth, or it may be considerably larger than this. After being established, the growth increases rapidly. In some cases the progress is much more speedy than in others. It may occur in the old as well as the young, while the powers of life are impaired and defective. But a less vigorous opposition is offered, the advance may be very swift.
Cases in Clinical wards of Royal Infirmary

Dr. Symes Case
The mischief may go on, until the disease
surface is nearly as large as a page of this
paper, such I have seen in the clinical
wards of the Royal Dispensary, but these are
instances recorded of the disease having
progressed with such facility, that the great
part of the surface of the back was finally
involved.

The swelling is not great, but just of an
angry dark brownish hue: at the arms
enhancement the enlargement is raised above
the skin, very hard & indurated; its character
raised by the angry red: — as matters
become worse, the size of the carbuncle
increased, the swelling does not rise higher,
but becomes more livid of a violet colour;
after this stage, a change becomes observable.
The induration in the centre of the swelling
gradually yields. It is replaced by a spongy
consistency, while the hard condition is
confined to the periphery, when the colour
& induration are both gradually shaded off
into the surrounding healthy tissue.
In virulent cases, the lesion may have involved an area of 5 to 6 inches in extent, within a period ranging from a week to a fortnight... The disease continued by extending its domain, steadily pressing outwardly its hard and rigid base, in the centre softening beyond, this passed into a pulpy condition, matter being formed, in time. A short time, amongst some of the meshes of layers of the outer border, it burrowed its way outward, thus is achieved by means of several openings, small & circular, which lead to the centre a redder appearance, a slight amount of pus, generally of a very solid character if released, suppuration is established, this appears another to approve the disease, and be afforded relief to the patient; these small cavities begin to enlarge, a burrowing process goes on in each, the advance being made laterally, leaving intact an upper crust of skin, finally these come to join one another, but these crusts shedding over them, the thin upper layer of skin...
Cases in the Royal Infirmary &c.
their, intensely vascular in its character. The diseased area is still enlarging. Vascular small openings are formed around them. These in their turn burrow towards the undermined skin begins to give way, and becomes spongy, yields up its vitality, thus degenerates into a liquid: till the distinctive energy of the disease may be unimpaired, and if permitted would go on, until the evil done would be irremediable. The system would succumb to the intangible disease. Sometimes the thoughts are very large; to the inexperienced eye would appear irreparable, but so to the surgeon of experience. Proper understanding undoubtedly cases do occur, when from the time the disease has been permitted to go on, after its great extent, any idea of a happy issue is precluded, but these are rare. Throughout the whole course the pain is intense, in character it dull & burning, and is accompanied by great heat in the neighborhood with proximity. At what might be termed the height of the disease—
disease, when the stage is advanced, when the organs of the system is beginning to fail, a period at which, but infrequently, our infirmary patients make their appearance, at last convinced of the necessity of applying for medical aid.—A view of a chilblain would likely reveal the following picture: A large diseased surface probably on the back, enclosed by a bright, raw, uneven band of raised, indurated, and inflamed skin, enclosing a space, possibly covered in by an undermined, perforated layer of lived integument,—possibly this is now a blackened eschar. Dug by red patches, irregularly attached, for having been cleaned by fowlties it may exhibit an irregular eroded, yellowish, grey-tined suppurating surface,—the surrounding margin in the latter case would be considerably elevated. Hence what excepted, while the scarlet-plaques would occupy a space of considerable breadth, sets that gradually fading into the surrounding healthy skin.

Constitutional—
Mr. Lyman's Principles
Constitutional Symptoms. — Almost invariably, constitutional derangement presides the manifestation of carbuncle, although in a few cases, no such condition can be observed, until the local disease had cropped out. Even then, the disturbance of health may be trifling. As a general rule, if as inciting a typical case, the man amid, that there is present symptomatic fever, with its train of phenomena — it is attended by want of appetite. This is followed by chills or fever, disorders of digestion, headache, lassitude, general weakness, followed by the hot dry skin; accelerated pulse. The severity of these symptoms is governed by the existence of the local disease. Should the case be allowed to go on, until the disease masters the healthful energies, the powers of life begin to flag, and this probably occurring in me already weakened from altogether frustrated, the inflammatory fever will more likely assume the typhoid or less type.
Children's Anatomy p. 139

P. Panket on Stomach & Renal Diseases (acute Diabetis)

Dr. Copland's Dictionary of Practical Medicine (Tumoricose Disease)
In Astley Cooper's lectures, Universit. Polt.

D. Craik's Dictionary (Hemicrania Diseases)
is range of cerebral disturbance, and Sir Ashley Cooper tells us in his lectures, that all the cases he had met with occur.

... on the head were fatal. If situated on the walls of the thorax, it has been said, inflammations within the chest may be induced. The same writer tells us that congestion or inflammation may occur, and that gastro-intestinal disorders may be induced.

On considering and analysing these symptoms, we are irresistibly driven to the conclusion, that there is present in this disease a perturbed state of the system for one once local disease could carry in its train such an array of symptoms, or show such pertinacity in its advance.

... what this noxious agent may be, or what is its nature. We are yet unaware of, many theories have been advanced regarding such, but we can only say they are theories, for those advancing them have failed in substantiating their views.
Mr. Sisler. Remants of Carnivals.
In some cases this pronounced condition of the system is "quite latent," as seen in a case recorded by Dr. Lith in the Edinburgh Monthly Journal. In consequence, the symptoms will be confined to the diseased spot, while the general health remains almost untouched. This furnishes us with a strong argument in favor of the affection being a constitutional one, that much as if the general disturbance was merely the result of the local disease, we could have no such exceptional case as this in ear.

"Hence of ordinary severity," but we can readily conceive why the poison may be present in the system, remain latent as regards constitutional disturbance, yet give rise to the local disease, its entire energies being directed towards that. It appears to come from an intensification and analysis of these symptoms that the backache is no mere local manifestation of a specific condition of the system, but may rather be characterized as the key-tone—
Cald ni private practice

O2 Copland's Dictionary
Symptom of the whole malady, in which concentrated, the principal exhibition of the diseased state of the body, and from which undoubtedly directly emanates part of the constitutional symptoms, for in a vast majority of cases, there is observable a cardependence, a balancing between the local & general diseased condition.

**Etiology**  **Prevalence as to Age**  **Sex**  **Class in Life**  **Time of Year**

Carbonaro affects both sexes equally, although, in each it is not into, nor is frequently at certain times, then at others, as in females, in whom it very often makes its appearance during menstrual changes; not particularly when the menstrual function is ceasing.

It makes no distinction between either rich or poor, but seems to be pretty equally diffused, although the styles of living must be widely different, there is
John Hunter's surgical works (article pulmonoe)
Mr. Sanger on diseases of the skin
is however discernible a preponderance in its occurrence amongst those lusty strong, while it is also not infrequently met with in the weak shattered.

Children appear seldom or never to suffer from this disease, in youth its prevalence is considerable, in adults it is more so, while about the middle of life & beginning towards fifty years, its preponderance is marked; it is also seen in the aged & decrepit. With regard to it attacking the well fed & well nourished, Dr. Hunter says "it occurs most frequently in those who have lived above par".

Some have been to hold as to say that they could observe a prevalence at particular seasons, thus Mr. Payne in his work on diseases of the Skin urges forth as the result of his observation, that it is most common in spring & summer.

Regarding the etiology of Carbuncles, we have previously established the fact, that
that often antecedent to, and invariably
contemporaneous with it, is the disordered
condition of the system, — we have here
fore to regard Cancer as contributing towards
the development of the Constitutional Con-
dition, and towards the rise of the ac-
compagnied Carcinoma, which almost
claims a separate existence. — St. Cope:
land in his article on Sarcomatous Disease
speaks of internal and external Cancer as hav-
ing power to originate the malady,
mentioning such cancer as stimulating
application to skin, bite of insects or
reflect of cleanliness (the latter referring
 presume, to the blocking of up of the
ducts of the sweat gland). Now this
is quite possible, as far as appearances go,
that several may have been in different
cases, the direct exciting cause of Carcinoma
but in addition to this, it was necessary
that these be engrafted on a Constitution
affording a favorable vicius, and in reality
these combinations had merely served to direct
the —
Mr. Sykes's Lecture, 2. Monthly Jr.
The diseased agency to seize upon the irritative seat, and spread itself to the theatre of its operations. Any disorder in the balance of the various healthy functions appears to be the most common cause, as far as is apparent to us, we can trace this, as we find an outbreak most frequently following on disorder of digestion, which may be brought about by a multitude of causes, such as habitual excess in eating from intemperance, from disorder of the alimentation. The disease may follow on anxiety of mind, want of sufficient exercise, as in short any circumstance disturbing the mode of life. And mark that any of these disorders may occur either in the weak, phthisic, or typically healthy. It appears to be apt to occur at any crisis or revolution in the health, as at the cessation of the menses in females, at the time of recovering from other maladies as fevers, etc.

(Transcription)
Diagnosis, Prognosis, Rate of Mortality.

The Diagnosis of this disease is simple and evident, liable to scarcely any risk of fallacy, from the well marked nature of its symptoms and appearances, from the small number of possible fallacies from boils it is readily distinguished, by their generally being several or score of these, while the individual boils cut, commence in a small abscess, differing entirely from the nature of the openings of Cellulitis. Cryptipelas appears as a more plausible fallacy, but in reality there is no danger of confounding them. In Cryptipelas, the disease is more speedy in its progress, is characterised by a cold instead of a livid colour, the limits are not well defined, the swelling is not so elevated, while the induration is less, at the same time, there is the occurrence of marked elevation in the Brysipelates affection. In Phlegmonous Brysipelas an acute form to narrow the limits of distinction.
Secreat General's Report (Letter from P. Foss)
distinction — the principal marked feature in the latter, being its diffused character & want of definite limits, we have another guide in the fact, that they generally occur on surfaces exactly opposed to one another as regards their position in the body, — besides these, the mode of commencement in each is widely different.

Carbuncle is not by any means a fatal disease. — Dr. William Farr in a letter to the Registrar General, which is appended to the latter's Report of 1855, informs us, that in 1854, the number of deaths resulting from Carbuncle amounted to 300. — And in 1855 to 255 deaths (in England). — In 1864 the proportion was 694 to 100,000 deaths from all causes, and in 1855 it was 607. — In forming a prognosis of a case, we must take into consideration, the Age, Sex and Strength of our patient, and great importance should be attached to the present medical history, mode of life, also.
also particularly to the present condition of health of the sufferer. Careful and distinct attention must be paid to the constitutional symptoms, their nature and tendency. As regards the Carbuncle itself, our Prognosis would in a great measure be guided by the stage it was at, the amount of tissue destroyed. In all cases our Prognosis might be favourable, unless the amount of tissue destroyed be very extensive, such as to preclude the idea of reparation, at the same time, in such a case, during its advance, the bodily powers will have been shaken, and wound themselves unable to regain lost ground; should this happen in one aged or weak, shattered by previous disease, or blighted by intemperate habits, then assuredly we must be prepared for the worst in spite of every remedial measure we may employ.

Pathology
Pathology. — One of the principal questions started regarding Carcinoma is an enquiry into whether it is of a sthenic or asthenic nature. Some of our ablest writers have appeared opposed to one another, in their views regarding this. After recalling what I have heard in the lectures room, examining what I have read on the subject, recalling up what I have been told, as far as myself. I must say that I cannot resist the conviction that this is an inflammation. Whether in its type, as evidenced by its evident obstructive symptoms, I cannot. The steady progress it makes in the disease, it makes in the degenerative - we can only draw our evidence from the local symptoms, as the course, tentional disturbances is not inevitable of the disease except in cases quite anti.
Mr. Syme

Mr. Sister's Remarks

Case for Mr. Syme's Practice
regards the situation it affects. Dr. Simeon has long been accustomed to demonstrate that the seat of Carbuncle is in the true skin, that this is evidenced by the appearance disclosed on opening a Carbuncle during the first stage, when its confinement to the Corium seems quite apparent; this is corroborated verified on examination by the microscope, which reveals its limits at first extending beyond the confines of the Cutis layer. This is well demonstrated and represented in Mr. Baker's Remarks on Carbuncle, in which he gives as the results of the investigation of two Cases. In addition to these facts, I may mention the occurrence of a case that occurred in Mr. Simeon's practice during last winter. A gentleman had a Carbuncle on his cheek of considerable size, arising from heating into the tissues. Dr. Simeon acting on these principles, at once checked its advance thoroughly by preserving its incisions, the result was perfect, no injury was inflicted, a complete cure.
The cure was effected - this is a case of great value, bearingly affording an intimation of the soundness of Mr. Symes' mode of treatment, for had this disease been treated in the subcutaneous cellular tissue, instead of the skin, the result would have been, that in cutting down to the base of the disease, important structures such as Stensen's duct, some of the nerves, vessels of the face would have been injured, before the disease could have been arrested; as it was, the utmost success of the diseased mass was reached, without trenching on these structures mentioned. Consequently, without mutilating the cellular tissue, this appears conclusive and satisfactory. - Undoubtedly, we must butt cases where other tissues are exceedingly involved, these may include the cellular tissue, fascias, or even muscles, but this would only happen in advanced neglected states - it may be explained by the cutis' iniquity of the tissue, and consequent extension.
Mr. Sister's Remarks

John Master's World
extension of disease. — On cutting into the cutis vera, we find it infiltrated with lymph — the vessels of the corium being expanded. Filled by this, such an explanation accounts for the swelling & inclination, from the consequent pressure for the pain also. — Here is likewise found an upper layer of the cutis vera, about the thickness of the epidermis, intensely red tinged with blood; this accounts for the blood hue lent to the corium.

Regarding the nature of the suppuration, there is something not clear about it. This matter is both insidious, in all probability its source is the infiltrated lymph, but it is quite possible, that very vascular layer of the dermis may hold an a peculiar action. — I think it worth while to quote the words of John Hunter: cancer; bringing it, although they even applied to a different theme, "the nature of the suppuration is not that of an abscess, — the
Sir Ashley Cooper's lectures.

St. Symon's Principles.
manner lies in cells, when it is formed, almost like water in annular cavities, a different elevation while takes place for the exit of matter. In these fatal cases mentioned by Sir Astley Cooper, as resulting from the cerebrospinal being on the head, he states that effusion between the arachnoid and the mater membrane was found "post mortem."

Treatment. The principles we are predisposed to quote as are the facts, that this is an inflammation apparently of a chronic character, confined to the corium. That accompanying this, there is a disordered constitutional condition, which is kept up according to the organs of the cerebrospinal, while the superficial eruptions of unaided are unequal to the task of mastering the diseases, in nine cases out of ten. The plan of treatment that flows from this summary embraces the following means, local blood letting,
Antiphlogistic Regimes, which might
cannot be characterised as blandly assuaging.
All surgeons agree, in according to the
Local Bloodletting. Their highest commendation
in adopting it. It must be thorough in
its operation, not partial or half, the
best mode. What generally adopted is to
make a crucial incision, penetrating
completely throughout the integument, to
the foundation of the disease, the simon.
That result is the escape of much dark
blood, with a slight amount of matter.
Following on this, comes the fading in
colour of the livid surface or contusion,
from the escape of the blood. The after
effect is wonderful, - the spirit of the
disease appears to be tamed, its virulence
is dispersed. The angry dark creasing
colour has fled. - The progress henceforth
will be steadily onwards. Should other
matter keep pace. - These measures
cannot be made too early. They arrest
the progress at once; even after large
thoughts.
thought have been formed, the effect of the
sections is complete, the process of
separation appears immediately to commence
that part of the strata utterly destroyed
may be removed by the knife or scissors,
a practiser must then be used to separate
the remaining parts and release the diseased
factors; in some cases this may be a
tendency to recurrence of inflammation.
This is likely due to insufficient incising
via renewal of the bloodletting will repair
the mischief. — The use of Caustics
has been advocated by some, the reasons
appended to its recommendation may be
of value in but in all the cases I have
seen, there certainly was no need for its
employment, for the power of the sections
the practiser appeared to be essentially
complete. Witches have been upheld by
some of value, but at the present day
the opinion of all appears to be entirely
against them. The adoption and
management of the constitutional treat-
ment
Mr. Syme.

John Hunter.
treatment is of paramount importance.
The indication afforded us here, is to correct
as well as possible the constitutional vice.
This appears to be best brought about by
using purgatives. Mild eliminatives, ac;
compounded by "soothing or stimulating
if required." — The Regimen here adopted
includes rest & quiet, with a suitable diet.
The best is undoubtedly milk diet; the
typical food of swine, which is at once
 bland, nourishing, easily digested, as well
insisted. — The great John Hunter
approved highly of alkaline remedies given
internally. It may have an effect, fitted
to correct the flaw in the system's integrity.

In unfortunate cases, which appear
to result only from neglect, a mistaken
Treatment, or a peculiar combination of
unfortunate circumstances, when the
Dreaded Condition is reduced to a low state,
we must just have recourse to what is
best calculated to maintain the strength
for the time being, with the reservation
that —
That it be as unirritating as possible.

After the specific energies of the modality are enquired & dispelled, more unirritating diet may be substituted, while the topical treatment will consist of washes & inunctions, their nature to be regulated by the condition of the case.

In adding my attention to such a subject as this, and treating it in the form of a thesis, I not only receive valuable benefit from the culture of the question before me, but am impressed with the indubitable importance of possessing orthodoxy, principles to guide and, and of the inappreciable value of an experience under such auspices. These can only be obtained & appreciated by unremitting study, by the decline of faithful pursuit of medical science & art.

Gen. Buell, M. D., C. S.